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To: Laurie Schwartz
HB 5326

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My name is Laurie Schwartz and I am speaking today to ask you to oppose House Bill 5326 which is a Physician-Assisted Suicide bill. Thank you for listening to my testimony and I respectfully ask you to vote "no" on House Bill 5326.

It is important to realize that we are here today mainly to reject a well-funded effort to push Physician Assisted Suicide on the people of Connecticut. This is not an issue that the citizens of this state would have raised as a concern on their own. During the past few weeks, I have asked many people in passing, if they were aware of the hearing being held today regarding the legalization of physician-assisted suicide. Many were repulsed at the mere mention of it. Most responded with shock that the state of Connecticut is holding a hearing on a bill that would place our beloved physicians in a position of offering us death, rather than hope and healing. Not a single person who I spoke to was in favor of it.

Advocates in favor of physician-assisted suicide will claim that preventing pain and suffering for terminally-ill patients is the motivation for this law. This assertion is not supported by the opinions of doctors, nurses, pain-management specialists and hospice care workers who are on the front-lines of providing care. While you may hear people speak about unique situations in which they witnessed a loved one suffer, remember that there will always be new or unusual circumstances that arise requiring us to find new solutions or to apply best practices. We have an opportunity in CT to become role models for other states by elevating ourselves to what is truly good and pursuing healing rather than promoting death.

At the root, I believe that advocates of this bill want us to respect a choice simply because they want to have a choice. We cannot do this. Simply asserting that we want a choice for ourselves does not mean we have a right to have it, or that it is the right thing to do. We are called to look beyond our own needs and think about what is best for all members of society. For instance, I could not discuss the details of this bill with my daughter as I felt it would be too disturbing and confusing for my 12-year-old to contemplate. I am also concerned about the many families who live with children who have mental illness and may fear them contemplating suicide. We can be certain that if we show by example that we legitimize killing ourselves to prevent our eventual physical "suffering", they will find a legitimate reason to take their own lives for their current mental suffering. Suicide will increase, and in all age groups. My own brother, despite having a glioblastoma brain tumor, had hope in the treatments available to him. He loved life and did not want to die, but he occasionally stated that he did not want to be a burden to others. I shudder to think that my own brother might have acted against his own desire to live, simply to alleviate the burden of others. Children in Belgium can now be euthanized. In my opinion me, it is clear that only negative thinking that would allow us to consider passing a bill like HBU 5326, and our only way out is to commit ourselves to positive thinking, and resist passing a bill that society will never be ready for. Next we must educate other states to follow our lead.

When talking about death, we are talking about one of the most profound experiences of life. We need more of a lot of things in CT, but we do not need more suicide. Let's do it right in CT. Vote against HB 5326.

Thank you.

Laurie Schwartz